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ABSTRACT

A study explored the relational control patterns which exist in academic advising sessions. Fourteen advising sessions between advisors and undergraduate students during the registration process were audiotaped and analyzed using a relational control coding scheme. Results indicated that neutralized symmetry (one-across, one-across) was preferred over other control patterns, and that submissive complementarity (one-down, one-up) and a transitory pattern (one-up, one-across) were also frequently used. Findings suggest that control patterns may change over time as the advising relationship is developed and that student satisfaction increased for longer advising sessions. Further research should include peer and evening school advisors as well as a wide variety of advising discussions. (Contains 65 references and 2 tables of data. An appendix provides the coding scheme.) (EF)

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RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND RELATIONAL CONTROL IN THE ACADEMIC ADVISING SESSION

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ABSTRACT

This study explores what relational control patterns exist in academic advising session. Academic advising sessions were audiotaped and analyzed using a relational control coding scheme. The relational control indicated that neutralized symmetry (one-across, one-across) was preferred over other control patterns. Submissive complementarity (one-down, one-up) and a one-up, one-across transitory pattern were also frequently used.

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RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND RELATIONAL CONTROL IN THE ACADEMIC ADVISING SESSION

As colleges and universities strive to keep enrollments manageable, retention has become more and more important. Declining enrollments beginning in the late 1970's increased competition for both recruitment and retention of students. One factor affecting student retention is the quality of academic advising (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979; Creeden, 1990). While a positive advising session could result in retaining students, inadequate advising has also been linked to attrition among both public and private universities (Kelley & Lynch, 1991).

A renewed emphasis on academic advisors and their relationship with student advisees began in the 1970's with a shift from an informational to a developmental approach (Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites & Associates, 1984). This developmental approach viewed academic advising as a part of teaching and was more student-centered than advising had been in the past. However, while much theoretical work has been done on advising, actual shifts in practice have been less common (Frost, 1990). The 1992 ACT Final Report of Academic Advising found that perceived effectiveness of advising programs had decreased since a 1987 survey (Habley, 1993).

Academic advising has been defined as a, "decision-making process during which students realize their maximum educational potential through communication and information exchanges with an advisor"(Grites, 1979, p. 1). It has been acknowledged further that communication is crucial to the advisor-advisee relationship and that good communication skills are essential for advisor effectiveness (Andrews et. al., 1987; Gordon & Carberry, 1984; Kramer & Gardner, 1983: Trombley, 1984). However, little research has been done on what is actually talked about

within the advising session. This study examines the advising interaction from a relational communication perspective.

While relational communication theory has primarily been used to examine marital relationships (Krueger, 1983, Millar & Rogers, 1987, Sabourin, Infante & Rudd, 1993) it has also been used in doctor-patient interactions (Cecil, 1998; McNeilis, Thompson & O'Hair, 1995; O'Hair, 1989; & Von Friederichs-Fitzwater, Callahan, Flynn & Williams, 1991) and foreign relations (Parks, 1977). One quality that each of these relationships shares with the advisor-advisee relationship is their ongoing nature. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) define an ongoing relationship as one that is "(1) important to both parties and (2) long-lasting" (p. 129). A 1981 study by Grites indicated that "students expect both accurate information and an interpersonal relationship from faculty, particularly through the advising relationship" (p. 32). While the advisee-advisor relationship may be less important to faculty than to students, it is a relationship that most faculty members are expected to maintain (Grites, 1981). Having an extended relationship means that patterns of communication should be established between advisor and advisee. Relational communication theory allows for identification and examination of those patterns as they may relate to relationship definitions and other outcomes such as satisfaction.

In developing a study to assess relationship development in the academic advising session, it is important to understand both current issues in academic advising and the relational control perspective.

Issues in Academic Advising

Academic advising has been a part of higher education since the formation of a formal academic advising system at John Hopkins in 1877 (Biggs, Brodie & Barnhart, 1975). The creation of the National Academic Advising Association reemphasized the importance of

academic advising to retention. During this same period, several studies linked academic advising with student retention (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979; Glennen, 1976; Noel, 1976). These studies and others will now be examined with an emphasis on the distinctions between developmental and prescriptive advising first, and then on the communication in the session.

Student Satisfaction with Advising

Students have indicated dissatisfaction with advising over an extensive period of time. Trombley and Holmes' (1981) research indicated that this dissatisfaction stemmed from three problems. First, faculty were not usually credited by the institution for doing excellent work in advising which meant they had little reason to put forth effort. Secondly, the lack of communication between various campus offices meant potential battles for control over various parts of advising. Finally, the lack of skills and motivation on the part of faculty made it difficult to improve conditions (Trombley & Holmes, 1981). The major response in the 1980's to criticism of advising was to go from a traditional approach (called the prescriptive approach), where faculty primarily dealt with paperwork such as signing registration cards and keeping an academic file on the student, to a developmental approach (Bostaph & Moore, 1980). The developmental approach emphasizes joint decision making between advisor and student to create a more personal relationship between advisor and student where discussion on a wide range of issues is possible. Despite the emphasis on developmental advising in the 1980's, a recent study demonstrated that students may not be receiving an ideal or improved type of advising (Alexitch, 1997). The research on advising has focused on these two distinct approaches, the prescriptive and developmental.

Prescriptive Advising

Much of the current research on communication in the advising setting emphasizes a traditional prescriptive approach. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) have identified the

completion of a student schedule as the primary goal for an academic advising session. From this traditional perspective there are three segments to the academic advising session that result in a completed schedule. First, the advisor diagnoses the needs of the student by reviewing previous courses taken and general academic history. Secondly, the advisor works together with the student to develop a schedule of courses for the next semester. Agar (1985) refers to this as the directive portion of the interview which fulfills the goal of completing the schedule. Finally, the advisor records the completed schedule in the student's file (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990). In this approach, the emphasis is on what is said and how that achieves the desired goal (a completed schedule) rather than on the building of a relationship between the advisor and advisee.

Developmental Advising

In developmental advising, a stronger emphasis is put on developing an advisor-advisee relationship that focuses both on the current academic situation and on possibilities for the student's future (Trombley & Holmes, 1981). Bostaph and Moore (1980) have assigned the advisor five separate roles when using the developmental model of advising. Each advisor is responsible for providing the student with current course information, career decisions, getting to know the student, explaining the student's educational purpose and providing encouragement to each student. Studies have indicated higher student satisfaction with advisors who use a developmental approach (Schmidt, 1989; Winston & Sandor, 1984).

The preference for developmental advising differs according to the type of student surveyed. Female students have demonstrated a stronger preference for developmental advising than their male counterparts (Crockett, 1987; Crockett & Crawford, 1989).

Communication in the Advising Session

Advising researcher Villeme (1982) acknowledges the importance of communication in the advising session. He claims that student trust and confidence in the advisor are crucial to the

advising process but he does not explain how that type of relationship is built in the advising session. This oversight occurs because of his focus on the content level of the advising session instead of on the relationship level of these sessions. The relationship level of the message should be crucial in establishing trust between student and advisor.

Extant research has focused on student satisfaction with advising as assessed by student satisfaction surveys. McLaughlin and Starr's (1982) review of advising literature reveals that, in most of these studies, students are dissatisfied with the advising they received. According to Winston and Sandor (1984), "several studies found that advisee satisfaction to be related to the social, interpersonal relationship between the advisor and the advisee" (p. 6). While the studies reviewed by both Winston and Sandor (1984) and McLaughlin and Starr (1982) reveal that the relationship between advisor and student is an important one, they do not examine communication in the advising session itself.

Several notable exceptions exist. The first is the research by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1990, Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). Their 1990 study analyzed 32 audiotaped academic advising sessions that used a mixture of native English speaking students and nonnative speakers. They examined the use of speech acts relating to status in the advising session and found that students have conflicting roles in the session. The 1992 study examined how students closed academic advising sessions. This analysis was based on thirty-one audiotaped academic advising sessions that took place between graduate students and faculty advisors. The researchers found that the closings used by participants in the institutional setting of an academic advising session varied from those used in natural settings.

The second exception is a study by Maxwell (1980) which analyzed communication strategies used in academic advising sessions. The study was concerned with how the communication skills used in academic advising sessions differed from those used in counseling

sessions. This study videotaped five academic advising sessions and had the sessions analyzed by four academic advising experts, two of these experts also had significant experience in counseling. These experts were asked to identify and define both positive and negative communication behaviors within the session, examine how communication strategies affected the outcome of the advising session, and analyze how the communication affected the success of the session. According to Maxwell (1980) the following communication strategies emerged as important to all four experts: "establishing rapport, engaging in critical listening, looking for and providing feedback, recognizing the impact of nonverbal symbols on the advising session, using effective open questions, and establishing an environment in which the student feels a relationship has developed that will bring him or her back in contact with the advisor on a regular basis" (p. 57).

Finally, a study by He and Keating (1991) used discourse analysis and functional linguistics to examine the roles of expert and novice in academic advising sessions. They argue that these roles are an integral part of the power relationship between student and advisor. The study analyzed one academic advising session where the advisor was a doctoral student working in the university advising center and the student was a female undergraduate. The session was analyzed by examining linguistic devices including, "polarity, modality, superlatives, adverbials of certainty/uncertainty" (p. 188). They also examined discourse strategies including, "control of topic, repair, and reported speech" (p. 188). The emphasis was placed on the counselor's role and concluded that both linguistic devices and discourse strategies used place the counselor in an expert role.

The concern of the present study is not whether the traditional or developmental model of advising is preferred but how the relationship between advisor and advisee is created through communication. Currently, very few studies have examined actual talk in academic advising sessions. Examining the talk is beneficial for several reasons. First, studying academic advising

from a communication perspective provides a new approach to how advising works. Secondly, this is an opportunity to apply relational control in a different context. Finally, relational control can identify what types of advising relationships are viewed as most satisfactory. This knowledge could help advisors in developing their approach to academic advising. The theoretical framework used to guide this study is discussed below.

Relational Control

The study uses the pragmatic perspective developed by Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) as its theoretical framework. Their approach focuses on the relationship between two communicators. Two concepts that were crucial understanding application of this theory are that there are both content and relational levels to communication and that symmetrical and complementary interactions exist within communication (Watzlawick et. al., 1967).

Several coding schemes were then developed that allow relationship development to be examined by looking at the patterns that exist within conversations to identify the nature of the interaction. From such a perspective, each utterance in a conversation can contribute to the definition of that relationship. Each of these conversational moves can be identified and then categorized as either one-up, one-down, or one-across (Watzlawick et. al, 1967).

Four patterns of interaction have been identified which pair individual utterances into interacts. Symmetrical patterns match in their sequence (↑↑, ↓↓ or →→). Complementary patterns have opposing sequences (↑↓ or ↓↑). In a parallel patterns neither partner dominates and a variety of sequences are included. The final type of pattern is a transitory pattern which incorporates one-across behaviors following a one-up or one-down behavior (↑→, ↓→, →↑, → ↓).

One of the concerns when working with these coding schemes is the question of validity in coding. Folger and Poole (1982) discuss the problems of whether or not a coder can code the conversation in the same manner as one of the participants and of maintaining consistency across

coding schemes. The question of whether or not a coder can determine the same interpretation as the participants is one of the reasons for including independent coding as part of the research method. The independent coder means that at least two individuals must interpret the conversation in a similar manner. The second problem of consistency across coding schemes is still being addressed in the literature on relational control coding (Rogers & Millar, 1982). Despite these issues the coding system developed by Rogers and Farace (1975) is considered to be a valid and reliable measure of relationships involving dominance.

Pattern Stability

An examination of patterns such as symmetry and complementarity is particularly interesting in the advising session because of the status of the student in relation to the advisor is an issue. Developmental advising literature indicates that advisors should aim for an exchange where neither party takes control which could be symmetrical. However, the advisor is usually someone in a position of control which could result in a complementary pattern. Consistent complementarity can also indicate problems in the relationship. Instead of altering roles as the relationship evolves, the individual remains in the role cast by the other person (Vanlear & Zietlow, 1990). In an advising interaction, this could mean that the advisor consistently takes control of the interview while the student responds by agreeing with what was said.

The parallel pattern where neither individual exhibits dominance is viewed as the more functional interaction pattern. The transitory concept lacks the research needed to categorize it as functional or dysfunctional (Vanlear & Zietlow, 1990).

This study examines what control patterns exist in academic advising sessions and how those patterns are related to advisee satisfaction.

Summary and Research Questions

As the literature above demonstrates, there is a need for continued study of relationship development between advisor and advisee for several reasons. First, advising continues to play an important role in student retention, grade-point average and morale (Alexitch, 1997; Andrews, Andrews, Long & Henton, 1987; Carstensen, D.J. & Silberhorn, C.A., 1979; Creeden, 1990). Secondly, while a positive relationship has been identified as crucial to student satisfaction with academic advising current research has not focused on how that relationship is developed, especially how their talk contributes (Grites, 1981). Additional research on the relationship between advisor and advisee could assist advisors in working towards increased retention and student morale.

The proposed study examines communication within the advisor-advisee relationship by coding the academic advising session. Therefore the following research question is posed:

RQ1: What are the control patterns in advisor-advisee sessions?

METHOD

Subjects

Given the preliminary nature of this research, a convenience sample of 14 advisor-advisee dyads was studied. Six advisor-advisee dyads were recruited from a small, private college in the Midwest. Advisors were contacted by phone or e-mail and requested to participate. Students were asked in class prior to signing up for an advising session if they would be willing to participate. The other eight advisor-advisee dyads were recruited from a mid-sized public university in the Midwest. Advisors were contacted by phone and asked to participate. Students were asked to participate when they arrived for their advising session. Students recruited for this

study were primarily freshmen or sophomores. Five males and nine females participated in the study.

Procedures

The study took place during the three weeks prior to registration for the following semester. Audiotaping sessions within this period meant that sessions were focused on the registration process and selecting classes for the next semester. First, the advisors were contacted via phone or e-mail and asked to participate in the study. Advisors volunteering were given a brief explanation of the study and were told that information collected in the study would be kept confidential. Secondly, students were contacted either during a class session or prior to the advising session and asked to participate. A brief explanation of the study was given and students were told that the data would be confidential and anonymous. Immediately prior to the advising session taking place both the student and the advisor were asked to complete a consent form.

Coding Procedures

The advising sessions were then transcribed using Jefferson's (1978) transcription conventions (as cited in Hopper, Koch & Mandelbaum, 1986) and coded using the Fairhurst (Fairhurst, Rogers & Saar, 1987) adaptation of Rogers and Farace (1975) coding scheme (See Appendix C). Coding was completed by the researcher and one independent coder not associated with the project.

Both the researcher and the coder completed a course in conversation analysis. Two review sessions were held to review the coding. The first session was held to discuss coding procedures. During this initial session each category was discussed. For the second session, both the researcher and the independent coder coded several interactions independently. At this second session, these interactions were discussed. Disagreements were resolved by discussion

between the coders. Additional interactions were then coded. Reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986)

Coding is done by examining units of conversation. The unit examined in relational control coding is the transaction between members of a dyad. Even the smallest unit must have two messages (Rogers & Farace, 1975; Mark 1971). Mark (1971) describes this as "in a speech sequence between individuals A and B the transaction units would be A1/B1, B1/A2, A2/B2" (223). Although this is the smallest unit used in the coding of the interaction, Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) emphasize the interaction should not be viewed as A causes B. Rather the interaction must be viewed as circular, enabling the researcher to look at the overall pattern of interaction.

When using the Rogers and Farace (1975) coding scheme (adapted by Fairhurst in Fairhurst et. al, 1987), each message is assigned a three digit code. The first digit represents the speaker, in this instance the advisor would be coded as 1 and the advisee would be coded as 2. The second digit reflects the grammatical structure of the sentence. These codes are 1=assertion, 2=question, 3=successful talkover, 4=unsuccessful talkover, 5=noncomplete, and 6=other. The final digit represents how the message responds to the message that came before it. These codes are 1=support, 2=nonsupport, 3=extension, 4=answer, 5=instruction, 6=order, 7=disconfirmation, 8=topic change, 9=backchannel and 0=other. After assigning each message a three digit code the codes are translated into arrows representing the type of control (Fairhurst et. al, 1987) (See Appendix D). If an attempt is made to gain control of the exchange then a ↑ symbol is used. If one partner relinquishes control to the other partner than a ↓ symbol is used. If no attempt to either gain or relinquish control is used then → is used.

After coding the session the transactions codes would be examined for patterns of behavior. The three primary patterns viewed are symmetry, complementarity, and parallel

interaction (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967). Symmetry occurs when assertions are matched by similar assertions. Using the Fairhurst coding scheme there would appear as ↑↑, ↓↓ or →→. Complementarity occurs when dominant assertions are met with accepting or submissive responses or vice versa. A complementary exchange would be coded as ↑↓ or ↓↑ (Parks, 1977). A parallel interaction would feature a combination of both patterns and neither partner would dominate (Vanlear & Zietlow, 1990). The interaction would look something like this; ↓↓ ↑↑ ↓↑. While each of these combinations might be repeated, there would not be a clear system of all up arrows or all down arrows. The initial concepts of symmetry and complementarity described by Watzlavick, Beavin and Jackson have been expanded to include transitory which would be coded as ↑→, ↓→, →↑ or →↓ (Rogers & Farace, 1975; Vanlear & Zietlow, 1990). Coding academic advising sessions would allow the patterns of interaction to be classified as either symmetrical, complementary, parallel or transitory.

Data Analysis

Research question one was analyzed using frequency data from a statistical package (SGUI) designed to code the 3 digits (Bakeman & Quera, 1995).

RESULTS

Sample Demographics

Fourteen students and eight advisors participated in the audiotaped academic advising sessions (N =14 dyads). Eleven students were under 21 and the remaining three were between 21 and 26. Most students were in their first or second year with one junior. Majors were self-reported and divided into 7 general categories. Four students had arts & letters majors, 4 were in education, and 2 students were categorized as undecided. Business, science, humanities and health/human services each had one student.

Six of the eight advisors were faculty members and two were full-time advisors The

majority of advisors were from arts & letters (n = 5), two were from education, and one was from health and human services. Years of experience in advising ranged from one to twenty-five years. In six instances the audiotaped session was the first with the student, three of the sessions were the third interview, one was the fourth meeting, and one was a sixth advising session. Most advisors reported that their average session lasted thirty minutes, other advisors said fifteen minutes or 10 minutes or less. One advisor reported that the times varied widely.

Research Question

The research question asked what control patterns exist in advisor/advisee interactions. To obtain this information each utterance was coded using the adapted version of Rogers and Farace's (1975) coding scheme (Fairhurst et. al, 1987). Twenty percent of the data was coded by two independent coders, intercoder reliability on the sample was achieved with a Cohen's Kappa of .96 on digit 2 and .77 on digit 3 (see Appendix for matrix of codes).

Once all transcripts were coded, the data were then entered into a sequential data analysis program, SGUI (Bakeman & Quera, 1995). Coding revealed that 3106 utterances were produced by advisors and their students in this sample (n=14). Advisors produced 1650 utterances and students 1456 utterances. The difference in utterances occurred for two reasons. First, advisors tended to begin and end the conversations. Secondly, it was noted during coding that many of the long sections of talk were attributable to the advisor and were frequently unitized into two or more utterances.

Table 1 provides frequencies of control codes for advisors and students separately. Notice that over half of the total utterances (55%) were coded as one-across moves. Followed by the use of one-up moves by both advisors (15%) and advisees (12%). The number of one down moves by advisors compared to advisees is also of interest. Advisors were responsible for 366 (12%) one-down moves during the sessions while advisees contributed 216 (7%) one-down

moves. In relationships with a power differential one partner deferring to the other is an expected pattern. Despite the power differential, students did not relinquish control more often than advisors in this study.

In these data, 2,809 interacts were produced in the advising sessions (See Table 2). The advisor column indicates exchanges that were initiated by the advisor while the advisee column indicates exchanges that were started by the student. Beginning with the first speaker, utterances are paired to create interacts. So, an interaction where the advisor spoke, then the student, and then the advisor would be two interacts: advisor/student, student/advisor. In relational control analysis a precedent has been established of looking at who initiates what type of exchange to examine how they define the relationship (Cecil, 1998; O'Hair, 1989). Additionally, examining the paired interactions both advisor and advisee initiated interacts (See Table 2) allows analysis of how both participants co-create the relationship.

A total of 1,407 interactions was initiated by the advisor and 1,402 exchanges initiated by the student. While the number of interacts initiated by both the student and the advisor are similar, differences exist in type of transaction code initiated. Students were more likely to initiate a transitory exchange (→↑ or →↓) than advisors. This was true both for one-across, one-up exchanges where students initiated 162 (5%) compared to the advisors 68 (2%), and one-across, one-down exchanges in which students initiated 164 (6%) and advisors initiated 88 (3%). Advisors were more likely to initiate a transitory exchange beginning with a one-up move (206) than students (178). Advisors also initiated submissive complementarity (↓↑) more than students did. Students initiated a one-down, one-up pattern in 112 (4%) exchanges while advisors used it in 208 (7%) exchanges. These patterns might suggest that students feel less comfortable taking

control and advisors make attempts to give that control to them.

The majority of total interacts were one-across, one-across moves or neutralized symmetry interacts. This was true both for exchanges initiated by the advisor and the advisee. As discussed earlier this may indicate a more neutral or leveling approach that these individuals take in the academic advising session.

The second most common interaction type (13% of interacts) was a transitory pattern of a one-up move followed by a one across move. The following example illustrates this pattern as the advisor answers a student's question about registration procedures The advisor first uses a direct response to the question, then gives an instruction concerning where to register.

> Advisor: Yes, you'll need to sign and date. (↑)
> Student: Okay (→)
> Advisor: And, you'll register over in XXX 320. (↑)
> Student: Okay, and I go register in 320. (→)

The student first uses a backchannel in response advisor's answer but does not attempt to change the topic or extend the conversation. The advisor then continues the set of instructions and the student extends the topic by repeating the instructions.

The other interesting result was the large proportion of one-down moves followed by one-up moves initiated by advisors (7%). This use of a complementary pattern was less common in exchanges initiated by the student (4%) During coding it was noted that several of the advising sessions had periods of talk where the advisor asked a series of questions and the advisee responded which would be seen as a one-down, one-up exchange. These exchanges tended to focus on courses the student was currently taking or planning on taking. This may also indicate an effort on the part of the advisor to include the student in the decision making process.

DISCUSSION

Implications for Relational Control

Academic advising is an important component of an effective strategy to retain studies. Current studies have focused on student satisfaction with advising and what types of advising programs are successful (Frost, 1990; Habley, 1993; McLaughlin & Starr, 1982; Winston, Miller, Ender, Grites & Associates, 1984). Few studies have examined communication within the advising interview. Relational control coding which has previously been used to analyze marital, doctor-patient, dentist-patient and minister-laity dyads is one method to examine communication between advisors and advisees. This study addresses the questions of what control patterns exist in academic advising session and those patterns relate to student satisfaction.

One of the primary findings of this study was that both advisors and advisees relied heavily on one-across moves throughout their interactions with one another. This was demonstrated both by the high number of one-up moves used (828 for advisors, 870 for advisees) and by the use of neutralized symmetry interacts. The majority of interactions in the advising sessions were neutralized symmetry (→→) both when advisors initiated (19.6%) and when advisees initiated the interaction (18.4%) This seems to indicate that neither the advisor or the advisee attempted to be dominating in the interaction. Instead both the advisor and advisee used verbal devices such as assertions that extended the topic and backchannels to continue the discussion rather than taking control of the conversation by changing the topic or using positive statements to support the other speaker.

While relational control coding has not previously been used to analyze academic advising sessions these findings can be compared to other research using relational control coding. It is

particularly interesting to compare these results to studies that have examined dyads with a power-differential such as doctor-patient, minister-laity, and dentist-patient. Results from doctor-patient interactions have varied with O'Hair (1989) finding that neutralized symmetry (→→) was rarely used (1.6), Cecil (1998) finding more reliance on neutralized symmetry (→→) (23%), and von Friederichs-Fitzwater, Callahan, Flynn & Williams (1991) finding that neutralized symmetry (→→) was the most common (27.1%) The percentage of advising interactions that used neutralized symmetry (→→) was much higher than these studies (47.3%). A recent study on ministers visiting sick patients found that neutralized symmetry (→→) was used 30% of the time in the interaction (Pace-Miller, 1999). Dentist-patient interactions have also demonstrated a reliance on neutralized symmetry (→→) with 39% of the interacts coded as one-across, one-across (McNeilis, 1990). The current findings on advisor-advisee dyads reinforce the finding that neutralized symmetry (→→) is a commonly used tactic in dyads where a power differential exists. Marital interactions have not duplicated these findings.

The coding scheme was originally designed for coding marital interactions and the findings on types of control patterns in those relationships have been distinct from research with other types of dyads. Millar and Rogers (1987) found that the transitory patterns of one-down/one-across (↓→), one-up/one-across (↑→), one-across/one-down (→↓), one-across/one-up (→↑) were the most common accounting for about 60% of the coded interactions. Neutralized symmetry (→→) was used in 20% of the interactions which is significantly less than occurred in this advising sessions. Millar and Rogers (1987) study was based on marital dyads where power is assumed to be equally shared. The heavier reliance on neutralized symmetry is a curious finding given the power differential nature of the advisee-advisor relationship. In addition to the heavy reliance on

neutralized symmetry (→→), advisor dyads used submissive complementarity (↓↑) and transitory (↓→, ↑→, →↓, or →↑) patterns.

Submissive complementarity (↓↑) was also a common pattern (14%) in the interactions. It is interesting that twice as many of these interactions (7% versus 4%) were started by the advisor. A possible interpretation is that throughout the coding it was noted that advisors generally asked the advisees for information including such topics as classes currently enrolled in, future classes, and time schedules. These questions usually extended the topic of conversation and thus were coded as a one-down move. This result may indicate that advisors were making an active effort to include students in the interaction.

In a related study, student satisfaction with advising was measured by surveying students (Morris, 1999). The study used Peterson's College Advisement Survey (1970) which measured twelve elements of advising including class selection, explanation, insistence, relationship, and satisfaction. Overall, in this sample students were mostly satisfied with the academic advising they were receiving which differed from previous studies which found that students were dissatisfied with their academic advisement (McLaughlin & Starr, 1982).

One of the interesting results from the survey was that students meeting for the first time with their advisor reported that the advisor was more insistent than students who had met with the advisor previously. This may indicate that the control patterns used change over time as the advising relationship is developed.

The second interesting result from the survey was that the longer the advising session the more satisfied students reported they were on five out of the six factors. The longer sessions may incorporate a wider variety of control patterns as the session moves through different phases.

One tentative hypothesis would be that longer academic advising sessions will exhibit a wider range of control patterns than shorter advising sessions.

Limitations

Several limitations exist on the results of this study. The first is the sample size used for the analysis. While adequate for a preliminary study, additional studies would need to be conducted prior to generalizing from these results to a larger population. Secondly, the scope of the study could have been narrowed. It would be particularly interesting to base future research on a specific area of advising. For example, two of the advisors used for the study were full-time professional advisors. Additional research could center on the advising centers alone.

Another limitation of the study was determined during data collection. The taping protocol for sessions needs to be more consistent that is, each advising dyad should be recruited using the same method. Differences may exist in advising satisfaction between students who make and keep scheduled advising appointments and those who prefer to drop in for sessions. Current research (Andrews et. al, 1987; Crockett & Crawford, 1989; & Frost, 1990) has demonstrated that different types of students prefer varying degrees of prescriptive and academic advising. It may be more effective to recruit student participants than contacting their individual advisors in order to get a wider sample of student types. The method of selecting advisors used in the study also may have effected the results. Advisors may have been more willing to participate in the study if they were confident of their advising skills.

Finally, application of the coding system used may have resulted in more neutral codes that would have been expected. While the large number of neutral codes used may indicate an active attempt on the part of the advisor and the student to keep the conversation neutral it may

also indicate a difficulty with the coding system used. The coding system was initially designed to code marital interactions which have a more equal power structure than doctor-patient or student-advisor relationships. This is most apparent is the use of instructions throughout the advising session. While it was common in this study for advisors to give instructions regarding issues such as where and when to register, courses that were required, and tests that the student needed to take, there was not a similar set of instructions for advisees to give to advisors. The use of instructions could result in more one-up moves by the advisor. However, the difference between one-up moves initiated by the advisor (15%) and those initiated by the advisee (12%) is not large. This may indicate that students have found alternate ways to gain control of the conversation.

Directions for Future Research

This study focused on faculty and staff advisors without including peer advisors or evening school advisors. These groups of advisors should be considered for future research.

. Research following students through multiple advising sessions would be useful to determine what changes if anything about these interactions. Longitudinal research would be useful in examining differences relational control patterns from freshman to seniors.

A examination of the content discussed would also be useful. This study was conducted prior to registration to keep the sessions focused on registration. One of the goals of developmental advising is to discuss the student as a whole person rather than a specific situation. Looking at a wide variety of advising discussions may assist in locating areas of talk that lead to dissatisfaction. This would be particularly true if combined with a longitudinal study. Students who meet more frequently with their advisor may discuss different issues than those students who meet infrequently.

Conclusion

Previous research in academic advising has largely relied on student surveys. This study examines communication patterns within the advising session itself. Within the advising session, there were more neutralized symmetry exchanges than might be expected and advisors tended to use one-down moves more than had been expected. This may indicate that the advisors in this study have adopted a more neutral approach to academic advising.

Several recommendations for academic advisors tentatively emerge from this study. First, asking students specific questions about their coursework or instructors is one way to assist the student in taking an active part in decision making. Secondly, when students initiate discussion of topics the advisor using a backchannel might allow the conversation to continue on a neutral level. Finally, emphasize that several types of strategies will be used throughout the advising session.

This study provides preliminary findings on control patterns that exist in academic advising sessions. It expands on previous research which focused on theoretical discussions of types of advising and student satisfaction research by analyzing the talk used within the session itself. Earlier research (Carstenson & Silberhorn, 1979; Creeden, 1990) has demonstrated that quality academic advisement should be an important goal of colleges and universities. This study may be able to assist both students and advisors in achieving that quality advisement.

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APPENDIX

Relational Communication Control Coding System (1989)

Digit One (Speaker)	Digit Two (Format)	Digit Three (Response Mode)
1=Speaker 1	1=Assertion	1=Support
2=Speaker 2	2=Question	2=Nonsupport
	3=Successful Talk-over	3=Extension
	4=Unsuccessful Talk-over	4=Answer
	5=Noncomplete	5=Instruction
	6=Other	6=Order
		7=Disconfirmation
		8=Topic change
		9=Backchannel
		0=Other

Table 1

Frequency of control codes

Control Codes		Frequency	Proportion
Advisor			
One-up (↑)		456	.15
One-down (↓)		366	.12
One-across (→)		828	.27
	Total	1650	.54
Advisee			
One-up (↑)		370	.12
One-down (↓)		216	.07
One-across (→)		870	.28
	Total	1456	.47
	Grand Total	3106	1.00

Table 2

Frequency of Transaction Codes

Transaction Code	Advisor	Advisee	Proportion*
↑ ↑	84 (.029)	72 (.025)	.054
↑ ↓	76 (.027)	100 (.035)	.062
↑ →	206 (.073)	178 (.063)	.136
↓ ↑	208 (.074)	112 (.039)	.113
↓ ↓	38 (.013)	35 (.012)	.025
↓ →	87 (.030)	62 (.022)	.052
→ ↑	68 (.024)	162 (.057)	.081
→ ↓	88 (.031)	164 (.058)	.089
→ →	552 (.196)	517 (.184)	.38
Total	1407	1402	.992
Grand Total	2809		

*Note = proportions are of the grand total interacts